

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY AND THE POLL TAX

*Michael Stainton**

York Centre for Asian Research, York University, Canada

e-mail: michael@yorku.ca

ABSTRACT

George Leslie Mackay (1844 – 1901) is a national hero in Taiwan, father of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and the first Canadian missionary sent overseas by a Canadian Church, to Taiwan (Formosa) in 1871. He was the most famous Protestant missionary of his generation. He is almost unknown in Canada today. Even less known is the fact that he was the most prominent and outspoken opponent of the first poll tax (head tax) imposed on Chinese immigrants by the Canadian government in 1885. Beginning with his first return to Canada from Formosa in 1881, he began to speak against this "unequal and unjust law". On his second and final return to Canada, in 1893, his "uncompromising opposition to all restrictive legislation against the Chinese" was fired to a fury by the attempt of the Customs Officer in Vancouver to impose the head tax on his Taiwanese wife. Mackay crossed the country speaking out against the "anti-progressive, anti-commercial and anti-Christian" law, encouraging resolutions in public meetings. He gained much support in the church, but no prominent Canadian politician or newspaper publicly supported his campaign. In 1894 he was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Through his urging, the General Assembly passed a resolution condemning the head tax, and proposing to send a delegation to visit Ottawa on this issue. Unfortunately, the whole plan was quietly dropped after Mackay returned to Taiwan. Had Canada listened to Mackay, there would have been no need to apologies to Chinese Canadians. Mackay is the prophetic pioneer of Canadian anti-racism.

Keywords: George Leslie Mackay, Canada Chinese immigration, Head Tax, Presbyterian, racism, Taiwan-Canada, John A. Macdonald, Royal Commission on Chinese immigration

* Michael Stainton is a Research Associate, of York University, and is the Secretary of Canadian Mackay Committee. His areas of specialisations are Taiwan indigenous peoples, Taiwan politics, and Canadian missionary history. Recent publications include "Nationalist Party", Worldmark Encyclopedia of Modern China (Cleveland: Gale Publications, 2009); "Relieving Human Misery: George Leslie Mackay set the tone for progressive missions", Presbyterian Record, January 2007; and, "Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples", Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life, 2nd ed., vol. 3: Asia and Oceania (Detroit: Gale Research, 2009; first published in 1998). Current work involves the editing a volume of papers drawn from a conference on *Religion and human rights in China*, and assembling writers for an edited volume on George Leslie Mackay.

OPPOSING ODIOS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF CHINA

It is Tuesday, 19 June 1894. The 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, meeting in St. John, New Brunswick, has been presented with an issue unlike any it has ever been asked to consider:

There was taken up and read an overture signed by a large number of members of the Assembly, asking the Assembly to take into serious consideration the unjust and odious discrimination against the Government and People of China, and in conjunction with other churches to endeavor to bring such influence to bear upon the government of Canada, as may result in the removal of the aforesaid unjust restriction. The Moderator was heard in support of the overture, the ex-moderator taking the chair to enable him to speak.¹

The moderator who broke the rule of not speaking to an issue was George Leslie Mackay (1844 – 1901). The overture was his work. This unusual act of leaving the moderator's chair to take part in the debate typifies this passionate man who never let conventionality stand in the way of doing good. The speech he made was reported in the *Toronto Globe*² on 20 June 1894:

Dr. Cochrane read the overtures re Chinese emigration. These overtures set forth that Canada ought to welcome people from all countries to develop her resources; that it is contrary to righteousness, to international comity, and to British practices and treaties to so discriminate. ...Moderator McKay spoke most eloquently, upholding the cause of the Chinese, and condemning the course adopted in placing restrictions upon them. "It was said here that the Chinese work cheaply, they retained their own food habits and customs, they returned home after they made money in this country, and they were grossly immoral". He would like to hear of any charge raised against the Chinese here, including the immorality, which charge was not made by the Chinese in their own country against the European residents there, and upon good grounds. He said he

¹ Report of the Foreign Missions Committee. 1894 In *acts and proceedings of the 20th general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*. Toronto: Press of the Canada Presbyterian, p. 35.

² In this essay, *Toronto Globe* and *The Globe* are used interchangeably.

held that in Canada and the United States in it's high time that the people remove the scales of prejudice and national pride from their eyes. He would feel proud to go back to Formosa, knowing that the church he loved in the country he loved had placed itself on record as against unjust restrictions against the Chinese.³

There were no opposing voices heard in the Assembly, though the *Presbyterian Record* reported that "some think the question to be purely one of expediency for the regulating of immigration, a matter concerning which the church has no call to approach the government, but nothing was said against the resolution and it was adopted".⁴ This resolution was the first time that the Presbyterian Church (or any other church) in Canada had spoken so decisively to the political issues of the day. Mackay challenged the assumption, widespread in Canadian society, concerning the danger that the *yellow peril* posed to *civilisation*. Through Mackay's urging, the church took a public, political position and decided to send a delegation to lobby the Thompson government⁵ on immigration policy. It was one of Mackay's greatest achievements, one that deserves greater attention in the studies of Canadian history.

It is perplexing that Mackay himself does not refer to the motion in his diary.⁶ Though this was the culmination⁷ of his thirteen-year campaign

³ *Toronto Globe*. 1894. The assembly: Reports on temperance and other topics, p. 11 (21 June 1894).

⁴ 1894. Meeting of the general assembly: The Chinese in Canada. *Presbyterian Record*, 19(7), 173.

⁵ John Sparrow Thompson, brought off the Nova Scotia bench into politics by Macdonald, led the Conservative government from December 1892 until December 12, 1894. He died at age 49 by a heart attack after the ceremony in Windsor Castle in which he was knighted "Sir" John. Thompson was the son of liberal-minded Methodist parents in Nova Scotia, who married Catholic and subsequently became Canada's first Catholic Prime Minister. *The Canadian Dictionary of Biography Online* writes: Few lawyers greater than Thompson have ever come out of Nova Scotia. This ability, joined to a vast capacity for work, gave him an extraordinarily powerful intelligence. Yet he wore his power quietly and with modesty; it came from his mind, not his manner. There was another thing about Thompson: he really loved justice, as he hated iniquity. Justice for him was not merely a profession but a fire that burned inside him, a passionate hatred of injustice and cruelty, which made him remarkable among both lawyers and judges. He radiated the strong sense of a mind unclouded by prejudice, concerned for truth. Albert Martin Belding, in the *St. John Daily Sun*, gets Thompson right in this memorable eulogy:

No dreams of glory dwarfed his loftier aim,
To whom his country's good was more than fame,
No sheen of gold obscured his clearer view,
Who saw the right, and held the balance true.

What Canada lost, as the poet truly said, was the "onward look of that untrammelled mind". *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* "Thompson, Sir John Sparrow David", 1891–1900, Volume XII, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca> (accessed 28 February 2010)

⁶ Mackay kept a daily diary throughout his missionary career. Though a line will often note the weather and his travels, it gets considerably more interesting as he becomes more passionate. It remains a

against "odious discrimination", his entry for June 19 records only that "some stirring speeches were delivered".⁸

THE ODIUS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF CHINA

Chinese immigration to British Columbia began with the Cariboo Gold Rush of 1858–1863. Some 7000 Chinese, mostly from California gold fields, came to work at the mines. In 1861, Amor de Cosmos' paper the *Victoria British Colonist* published the statement: "We have plenty of room for many thousands of Chinamen... their industry enables them to add very largely to our own revenues".⁹ In the same year, laws were passed allowing aliens to own real estate and to obtain status as British subjects. "However, by the mid-1860s racist incidents began to happen. Many were incited by Californians, such as Leonard McClure who founded the *Victoria Gazette*".¹⁰ The California connection was important, as it was seen as a harbinger of things to come in British Columbia. In 1875, the new province of British Columbia disenfranchised all Chinese and natives. Then, in 1878, the province attempted both to impose a \$40 landing tax on Chinese and to disbar Chinese from employment in public works. The law was overturned by Judge John Gray, who ruled it unconstitutional.

Coincidentally, 1878 was also the year of Mackay's controversial marriage to a "Chinese lady" (Tiu^N Chhang-mia, Minnie 張聰明). Responding to his Canadian critics from the Presbyterian Board of Missions, he defended his decision. His marriage was concrete evidence of the Church's mission and an act perfectly in keeping with his own heartfelt

mystery, however, why he usually makes no comment on turning points in his life. See George Leslie Mackay, 2007. *Mackay Diaries: Original English Version, 1871–1901*. In Neng-Che, Y. and Chih-Rung, C. (Eds.). Tamsui, Taiwan: Aletheia University and Northern Synod of the Taiwan Presbyterian Church. Hereinafter: Mackay Diaries.

⁷ And apparently the end. It is likely that some Presbyterian MP presented the petition to the House, but there is no evidence of any such delegation. Neither Mackay's diary, the *Presbyterian Record*, nor reports to the 1895 General Assembly where he ended his term as moderator, make any mention of follow-up. Mackay never refers to the Poll Tax issue again in his diaries. In that era the Presbyterians had no continuing central committee, and the moderator's functions ended with signing the ritual "Loyal Address" to the Queen and the Governor General, which Mackay did from his home in Zorra on August 24. The only other reference to him acting as moderator was when he received an invitation to the State Funeral of Prime Minister John Thompson, in Halifax, which he did not attend.

⁸ Mackay Diaries, p. 994.

⁹ *Victoria British Colonist*, 6 July 1861, cited by Vivienne Poy, The Chinese head tax redress controversy. Lecture, University of Toronto (accessed 25 November 2003).

¹⁰ Ibid.

belief that "Chinese and Canadians are exactly the same in the presence of our Lord".¹¹

The campaign to restrict Chinese immigration then moved to the Parliament in Ottawa. In 1879, after the return to power of Macdonald's conservatives, a *Select Committee on Chinese Labour and Immigration*, chaired by British Columbia MP Amor de Cosmos,¹² held hearings. Five MP's and two Senators — all from British Columbia — testified at the Committee. Drawing in part on the conclusions of an American congressional committee on the same question, it reported there was "much evidence showing the undesirableness of encouraging Chinese labor and immigration". It recommended "that Chinese immigration should not be encouraged" and that "Chinese labor ought not to be employed on Dominion works".¹³ The Macdonald government ignored them, though the issue was regularly raised in both the press and in Parliament.

¹¹ Mackay to McLaren (17 December 1877). Unpublished Mackay letter in *Formosa Mission Correspondence*. Records of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. United Church of Canada Archives 79:149 Box 1 File 1.

¹² *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*: The issue of race also demanded increased attention from de Cosmos in the final years of his public career. His views on native Indians and Chinese immigrants always reflected settlers' values and stereotypes. In the 1880s he spoke of both Indians and Chinese as *inferior* peoples; it had been particularly in the early years of the gold-rush, when Indians roamed the streets of Victoria, that he thought them so. He portrayed Indians as *irrational* yet generally susceptible of *improvement* and *redemption* if removed from the worst influences of whites and trained in *civilised* occupations, especially agriculture. Chinese immigrants, while less degraded, represented a more fundamental threat because they *did not assimilate*. At the same time, de Cosmos's desire to promote economic growth and his recognition that minority groups could provide much-needed labour softened these negative stereotypes. Thus he praised the Indians' contribution to the market economy through fishing and agriculture. The Chinese too, he noted on several occasions in the 1860s, would prove immensely helpful in unlocking the region's vast storehouse of wealth. However, racial animus in British Columbia intensified as the province's settler-population grew, and the ambiguity that had earlier marked de Cosmos's opinions on minority questions lessened. He informed the House of Commons in 1877, and again in 1880, that British Columbia whites were becoming increasingly frustrated with the federal government's Indian land policy. Concessions of land to Indians were over-generous, de Cosmos argued, blocking legitimate white settlement. In addition, he now opposed recognition of Indian title to land, which he had previously supported, and urged that Indians no longer be treated as a *privileged class*. The Indian should be taught to *earn his living the same as a white man*. Anti-Chinese feeling increased most noticeably among Victoria's growing white working class, who felt that Chinese labourers competed unfairly with white workers. Although de Cosmos tried to keep pace with this mounting racial hostility, it was Noah Shakespeare and his supporters in the Workingman's Protective Association who led the anti-Chinese movement. The 1,500-name petition that de Cosmos introduced in parliament in 1879 had been drawn up by Shakespeare. Significantly, in the 1882 federal election it was Shakespeare, running on a stridently racist platform, who defeated de Cosmos. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. Amor de Cosmos. 1891–1900, Volume XII, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca> (accessed 28 February 2010).

¹³ Joseph-Adolphe, C. and Sir John, H. G. 1885. *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese immigration 1885*. Canada Parliament, Sectional Papers, 48 Victoriae, pp. xix-xx. Hereinafter: Royal Commission.

24 February 1885

Dominion Parliament 23 February

BC Immigrants — Mr. Pope in replying to Mr. Baker (Victoria) said the reports of immigration agents indicated that 9000 white and 3000 Chinese had entered British Columbia during the [previous] year.¹⁴

All six British Columbia seats in the House were held by Conservatives until 1896, Macdonald himself sitting for Victoria from 1878 to 1882. One reason for this was certainly the fact that the most important Dominion work of all — the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) — could not be built without Chinese labour. Macdonald himself pointed this out in the House (12 May 1882), in response to de Cosmos' plea that the Canadian government take action to repress Chinese immigration. "[I]f you wish to have the railway finished within any reasonable time", Macdonald argued, "there must be no such step against Chinese labor".¹⁵ Whereas some enemies of the Chinese reluctantly agreed to delay expelling them until completion of the Railway, beginning in 1879 the government of British Columbia sent annual petitions to Ottawa asking for expulsions, bans, or restrictions on Chinese immigration. However, both economic interest and constitutional principles weighed against such a policy. The constitutional issues, ironically, were addressed by Macdonald's Secretary of State, Joseph Chapleau, at the start of his two-hour speech introducing the 1885 Law to restrict Chinese Immigration:

[L]ast session a motion was made by one of the hon. Members representing the city of Victoria, British Columbia, to the effect "that in the opinion of this House it is expedient to enact a law prohibiting the entrance of Chinese in that portion of Canada known as British Columbia." I must say that at the time I was struck with a feeling of surprise, which I am sure has been shared by many members of this House, that a demand was made for legislation to provide that one of the first principles which has always guided the English people in the enactment of their laws and regulations for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in this country, should be violated in excluding from

¹⁴ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, (24 February 1885).

¹⁵ Canada, House of Commons. 1882. *Debates*, 20, 1477 (accessed 12 May 1882).

the shore of this great country, which is a part of the British Empire, members of the human family.¹⁶

Like many Canadians, Macdonald identified himself as British. In response to his Victorian constituents, he conceded that the Chinese were only in Canada as temporary workers and that, if they were to stay, they "would not be a wholesome element for this country". He continued: "I believe that they are an alien race in every sense, that would not and could not be assimilated with our Arian (sic) population"¹⁷. But "at present it is simply a question of alternatives — either you must have the Chinese or you cannot have the railway".¹⁸ So, "Old Tomorrow", having a solid majority on his side, carried on his well-habituated policy of delay. On 5 July 1884, Macdonald's government finally appointed a Royal Commission to "make an enquiry into and concerning all the facts and matters connected with the whole subject of Chinese immigration, its trade relations as well as the social and moral objections taken to the influx of the Chinese people into Canada". Many factions in British Columbia refused to take part in it because they saw it as just another of Macdonald's delay tactics. In particular, many were unhappy that it was headed by Sir John Gray,¹⁹ who as judge of the Supreme Court in British Columbia had ruled against British Columbia in the 1878 *Tai Sing* case. Despite his stated belief (12 May 1882) that the Chinese were "at all events a foreign and alien race", Macdonald appears to have been setting

¹⁶ Canada, House of Commons. 1885. *Debates*, 20, 3009 (2 July 1885).

¹⁷ Canada, House of Commons. 1885. *Debates*, 20, 3009 (2 July 1885).

¹⁸ Canada, House of Commons. 1885. *Debates*, 20, 3009 (2 July 1885).

¹⁹ Gray, a New Brunswick Father of Confederation, served in the Commons from 1867–1872. He realised in 1872 he had no political future and he was not a candidate in the elections held that year. He sought and was granted a puisne judgeship in the Supreme Court of British Columbia on 3 July 1872. Gray served his term with great distinction, providing a balance and specialised skills that would otherwise have been lacking. As a judge Gray was to become involved in two controversial subjects, the treatment of the Chinese and the boundary between British Columbia and Alaska. Discrimination against the Chinese in British Columbia began shortly after the arrival of the first immigrants in the 1850s. In 1878 Gray ruled in *Tai Sing v. Maguire* that the intention of the provincial Chinese Tax Act, 1878, was to "drive the Chinese from the country, thus interfering at once with the authority reserved to the Dominion Parliament as to the regulation of the trade and commerce, the rights of aliens, and the treaties of the empire". The act, according to Gray, was *unconstitutional and void*. Undoubtedly this decision led to his appointment on 4 July 1884, along with Joseph Adolphe Chapleau, as a commissioner on the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. Their report identified three "phases of opinion" in the province: the first, "of a well meaning, but strongly prejudiced minority, whom nothing but absolute exclusion will satisfy"; the second, "an intelligent minority, who conceive that no legislation whatever is necessary—that, as in all business transactions, the rule of supply and demand will apply and the matter regulate itself in the ordinary course of events"; and the third, "of a large majority, who think there should be a moderate restriction, based upon police, financial and sanitary principles, sustained and enforced by stringent local regulation for cleanliness and the preservation of health". Though Gray appeared personally to support the second opinion, he recommended the third. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* "Gray, John Hamilton", 1881–1890, Volume XI, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca/> (accessed 28 February 2010).

things up for a balanced report, perhaps awaiting voices to speak out against race-based restriction with as much passion as those who opposed Chinese immigration. Mackay was one, and perhaps the only, voice who spoke with such passion.²⁰

MACKAY'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE INCLUSION OF CHINESE: 1881

Mackay's public campaign for the inclusion of Chinese began on his first return to Canada in 1881. At the "Grand Meeting"²¹ of some 2000 people held 13 October 1881 in Woodstock, before his return to Taiwan, Mackay turned to the one subject he had not yet addressed. "He was no politician, but the morality and justice of his native land were dear to him. He referred to the immigration of the Chinese to British Columbia and the attempts that were being made there and at Ottawa to exclude them by unequal and unjust laws. With impressive and thrilling eloquence he denounced the course of their enemies, and appealed in a way that electrified the whole audience — to Canadians, to crush the monster Tyranny that was now daring to show its head; and speak out in behalf of liberty and fair play to all. Alluding to the grand resources and glorious future of Canada, he would never believe that she would harbor such tyranny or strangle the liberty she now enjoyed. He appealed to his fellow countrymen, who could go freely to China, to stand up for liberty and morality and try to elevate and Christianize all".²²

Mackay's passion was certainly shared by others, especially Highland Free Kirk Zorra Pioneers, Southern Ontario clear Grits, reform Liberals and evangelical Protestants. The "splendid man" John Cameron, for example, was an evangelical Methodist who founded the *London Evening Examiner* in 1863. It became the second most important liberal reform paper in Ontario and "one of the finest dailies in the dominion", after *The Globe*, of

²⁰ Neither the *Presbyterian Record* nor the *Canadian Methodist* for 1885 makes any reference to the question. In July the Methodist Niagara and Manitoba Conferences passed resolutions condemning the Senate for "mutilating the Scott Act" (Canada Temperance Act). The Presbyterian General Assembly did the same in June, but only after a debate about avoiding "moral terrorism" in which it had to be argued that "it properly belonged to the functions of the Christian ministry to form public opinion" *Presbyterian Record* (July 1885: 198). It was only with the influence of the Social Gospel movement in the 1890s that the idea that churches had a corporate responsibility to speak on issues became accepted. Hence my claim that Mackay's Poll Tax overture was a first for any church in Canada.

²¹ Mackay's diary laconically records: "Tues 11 Woodstock Grand Meeting. Nearly 2000 present". Mackay Diaries, p. 962. Yet it was at this meeting that he was presented with a gift of over \$6000 from the churches in Oxford County to build Tamsui Oxford College. This grand meeting and gift constitute one of the most important turning points in his life as remembered in both Taiwan and Oxford County.

²² Woodstock, O. 1881. *The Sentinel Review*, p. 4 (14 October 1881).

which Cameron was also editor from 1882–1890. He was a close political ally of Edward Blake.

In the early 1880s, when the issue of restricting Chinese immigration was the major political question for British Columbia, south-western Ontario was the political home of Scot Alexander Mackenzie (born in Perthshire, Prime Minister 1873–1878) and his successor as leader of the Liberal party in opposition, Sir Edward Blake.²³ Blake's *protégé*, and successor as premier of Ontario (1872–1896), Sir Oliver Mowat, was, like Mackay, a devout Canadian-born Scots Presbyterian. Representing North Oxford (the riding encompassing Zorra Township) during his entire time as Premier, he considered his calling to be a "Christian statesman" and was a personal friend of George Leslie Macka.²⁴ *The London Advertiser* advocated these reform liberal political views, as did the *Toronto Globe*.²⁵

FEBRUARY 1885: THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON CHINESE IMMIGRATION

In 1893, Mackay would excoriate "fallen America" and the "ignorant mob out West" (see section on 1893 below). This was more than just Scots-Canadian prejudice. The Royal Commission began its 1884 hearings in San Francisco, which "provided the opportunity for studying it on the spot where it appeared on the largest scale and under circumstances analogous to those existing in British Columbia. And not only so. In the State in question there had been as a consequence of agitation a great inquest on the subject eight years. That had been followed by still more violent agitation". The Commission noted that "the present of California may prove the likeness of the future of British Columbia".²⁶ The Canadian government was well aware

²³ Blake was an evangelical Anglican workaholic tormented all his life by the inability of law and politics to bring about moral perfection. For this reason he turned down the post of Chief Justice of the new Supreme Court, which he created, and eventually moved to sit in the British House of Commons representing the Irish Nationalist Party! He was leader of the opposition in 1885 but apparently silent during debate on the Chinese Immigration Act.

²⁴ Visiting churches along the Miramichi in New Brunswick, Mackay makes a rare political comment in his diary on 27 June 1894: "at 10 a.m. heard of Mowat's election again to power. This is as it should be because he is a noble generous Christian. Hot day with clear sky. I spoke in the Baptist church 1100 people were present" (Mackay Diaries, p. 995).

²⁵ George Brown (1818–1880) was another Scottish evangelical Presbyterian and hence an ardent advocate of political and religious liberty. He was born in Edinburgh, the founder of the Ontario Clear Grits (reform liberals), a Father of Confederation, and an outspoken opponent of Catholic political power and aristocratic privilege. *The Globe* continued his politics long after his death from an infected gunshot wound inflicted by a disaffected *Globe* employee, first under the editorship of the Methodist founder of the *London Advertiser*, John Cameron (1892–1890), then John Stephen Willison (1890–1902), also from *The Advertiser*.

²⁶ Royal Commission, p. xi.

of the racist riots against the Chinese in California preceding passage of the 1882 US law barring all Chinese immigration for ten years.

After hearings in San Francisco, Victoria, Vancouver and Lillooet, Grey and Chapleau presented their 800-page report to Parliament in February 1885. It was clear from the voluminous testimony given that there were no economic, moral, social or medical "considerations which it is alleged make Chinese immigration undesirable".

The *Globe* did not offer any editorials on the issue,²⁷ but the large report the next day made it clear that the report was read as being favourable to the Chinese. In the full article, in fact, *Toronto Globe* made no negative comments regarding government inaction or incompetence (something that typified much of their Parliamentary reporting). This, coupled with the bottom line headline, "Continued Immigration a Most Desirable Thing" (a conclusion not stated in the report), suggests that editor-in-chief Cameron²⁸ was indeed a soul mate of Mackay.

²⁷ An assertion I must qualify with "at the time of any of the main events between the presentation of the Report in February and its passage in July". It is possible that there was commentary at another time, but I suspect not. On the one hand, *The Globe* would have felt constrained to support the workers' opposition to Macdonald's immigration policies, which often included demands for anti-Chinese restrictions. On the other hand, like Chapleau, Blake and other Liberals (and *The Globe* was a Liberal paper), they would have advocated a government based on morality and justice, expressed through constitutionality. The silence probably suggests an embarrassed feeling, like Chapleau's, that the Act was undesirable but the least offensive of the alternatives in sight and better than doing nothing and letting things follow California's example. As it was, passage of the Act did not prevent an anti-Chinese riot in Vancouver on 23 February 1887, though courageous action by two policemen prevented any loss of life. Moreover, as advocates of provincial rights, the Liberals probably felt that they should not oppose the almost unanimous demand of provincial and federal politicians and the workers who elected them in B.C.

²⁸ From 1882 to 1890, John Cameron (the *splendid man* Mackay met as editor of *The Advertiser* in 1893) was editor of *The Globe*. A "talented and principled journalist", he built *The Globe* into a paper with "a reputation for impartiality" but "Cameron's desperate efforts to find positions acceptable to both the (Liberal) party and his readers made *The Globe* appear irresolute and resulted in alienation of both masters". *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Cameron, John", 1901–1910, Volume XIII, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca> (accessed 28 February 2010). His approach to political issues may be sensed from two editorials for 2 July 1884, one year before the Chinese Immigration Bill. In "The Irrepressible Senate" he writes: "One of the planks of the Liberal platform is that the Senate should be made elective. At Harriston [Ontario] Mr. Blake explained... the senate as now constituted, is a refuge for Tory incapables who have rendered some corrupt service to the Tory chief and of Tory partisans whom some constituencies have declared unfit". In the other editorial, "Vulgar Democracy", he attacked "the tendency of so-called Conservative statesmen to adopt the principle of what has been very appropriately called 'vulgar democracy' ...the same abnegation of principle which the Conservatives of Canada have now adopted and are now acting on. It is an avowal on the part of those who make it that they are political prostitutes who have no opinions which they regard as valuable. No principles — except to gain and retain place... this is not democracy but demagogism".

25 FEBRUARY 1885

CHINESE IMMIGRATION
Sir John's Commission Presents its Report
STRONGLY FAVOURING THE HEATHEN
John Chinaman Quite as Moral as his Neighbors
AND A MORE SERVICEABLE CITIZEN
His Continued Immigration a Most Desirable Thing

Figure 1. Testimony

[R]eviewing the testimony taken at Victoria, Judge Gray says there is the same preponderating testimony as to the Sobriety, Industry, and Frugality of the Chinese as Manual labourers and reliance to be placed on their performance of contracts. The habits and modes of life of the Chinese are in many respects objectionable, their religious practices idolatrous and offensive, their sordid desire for the accumulation of money and hoarding it up injurious, but these same faults are to be found among other people, and if all were excluded against whom such charges could be brought, the population of British Columbia would be extremely limited. The soundest legislation in a free country is that which is based on the highest moral principles, at the same time recognizes the existence of frailties and errors of mankind, and so frames its enactments that it will accomplish the greatest good attainable for the greatest number, though it may not be all that might be desired.²⁹

The follow-up to the Report was over-shadowed by other events that spring. First, there was the financial crisis of the CPR, which was saved by the Northwest Rebellion, and the resultant perception that the Macdonald government was ready to fall any day. In addition, *The Globe* was especially concerned with the progress of the Scott Act, a restrictive temperance law. We can trace the development of the Chinese Act through reports in *The Globe*:

²⁹ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 2 (25 February 1885).

26 February 1885

Dominion Parliament 25 February 1885

In the Commons today many petitions were presented against relaxation in the stringency of the Scott Act. Also... petitions against Assisted Immigration, against Chinese immigration... A message from the Governor General presenting the report of the Chinese Commission was laid on the table. Mr. Blake called attention to the fact that the report had been laid on the table of the Senate the previous day...³⁰

Thursday 12 March 1885

Dominion Parliament Ottawa 11 March 1885

In Commons today among the petitions presented were those of the Toronto Branch of the Amalgamated Carpenters, presented by Mr. Beaty, praying for the passage of the Factory Act and in favour of the restriction of Chinese immigration.³¹

Friday 13 March 1885

Dominion Parliament 12 March 1885

(Leader of opposition) Edward Blake asks how soon a measure on Chinese immigration (as promised by Mr. Chapleau in Victoria during the Royal Commission hearings) would be introduced. Chapleau replied that he did not remember any such promise. Blake: "I refer the minister to his own report".³²

Saturday 14 March 1885

Chinese Immigrants

Are Refused Landing in British Columbia
Conflict between Provincial and Federal Authority
Vancouver 13 March: Twenty Chinese who arrived on a steamer today were not allowed to land. The police are acting on orders from the Provincial government — and the Dominion

³⁰ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 2 (26 February 1885).

³¹ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 2 (1 March 1885).

³² *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 2 (13 March 1885).

Customs officials are powerless. There is much excitement in Chinatown.³³

Chinese immigration was certainly not anyone's main concern in March 1885. The Northwest Rebellion had just begun, and the CPR was in desperate need of more funds. The Liberals, moreover, were in full attack against the Macdonald government for incompetence on both accounts.

13 April 1885

Secretary of State Chapleau lays the Chinese Immigration Bill on the table.³⁴

1 July 1885

COSTLY IMMIGRANTS reports on questions in the House about \$48,000 subsidy given to a German steamship line running between Germany and Canada to encourage German immigration. In 1884 a total of 58 Germans immigrated to Canada.³⁵

The issue of subsidising European immigrants was much more important to the Liberals than Chinese immigration, because it was universally opposed by Ontario workers' organisations and also smelled like the Macdonald government giving money to its friends.

4 July 1884

Notes from the Capital 3 July
In Praise of the Chinese

Supporters of the Government undertook to act as obstructionists today. Mr. Chapleau introduced his Chinese Bill [for a second reading] and made a wholly unnecessary speech of two hours' duration. He praised the Chinese as frugal, honest, industrious, and useful citizens, and almost deplores that he was compelled to legislate against them. He candidly admitted that "party exigencies" and not his own convictions, impelled him to bring in a Bill to restrict Chinese immigration. Then Mssrs.

³³ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 4 (14 March 1885).

³⁴ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 2 (13 April 1885).

³⁵ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 3 (1 July 1885).

Shakespeare, Gordon, Baker and Home talked until near midnight. As one British Columbia member sat down there would be cries from all parts of the house for another, until at last, Mr. Ross, the seventh member from British Columbia was called for but failed to respond.³⁶

A much larger space (an entire column) was given to the objections of a Toronto labour committee "respecting the encouragement [through Pope's policy of assisted immigration], and condemn[ing] the same as being detrimental to the best interests of the whole country". Two issues highlighted were "condemnation of the course of the High Commissioner [to Britain Sir Charles Tupper] in this particular, as the country should not be made *a slaughter market* for the useless and criminal population of British cities and towns", and "it was decided to send a requisition to the Mayor, asking that a public meeting be called to consider the Chinese labour question".³⁷

The Globe report on the virtues of Chinese immigration ends with the line: "The House of Commons passed a resolution declaring it advisable that an Act regulating Chinese immigration should be passed".³⁸

In his "wholly unnecessary speech of two hours' duration" presenting the Act, Chapleau (2 July 1885) argued:

"I am satisfied that my statement will not be contradicted when I say that prejudice and rivalry are the main sources of opposition to their presence among us ... Opinions differ on this question but no one differs in this, that we would infinitely prefer that white immigrants should occupy this field... Chinese, when they come in large numbers threaten us, not the peace of the country, and not the morals of the country, but they hurt the sentiments of the people... If my hon. Friends (who represent British Columbia in this House) were to go back to their Province without legislation of some kind being arrived at in the direction of settling this problem, the peace of the country would be threatened... Some journals have called (this Bill) a draconian measure, while others have said it was a milk and water measure. I say the measure was necessary".

³⁶ *Toronto Globe*. 1885. Notes from the Capital, p. 3 (4 July 1885).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The debate also reveals the strong role played by differences in class and not simply race. Passionate opposition to Chinese immigration in British Columbia came mainly from workers' associations, and their political spokesmen such as Noah Shakespeare. In arguing it was not only a BC issue, Victoria MP Edward Baker pointed out that "a number of laboring associations in the older provinces in Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal and Quebec have raised their voices in protest against the immigration of Chinese into the Dominion".³⁹ Baker read a resolution "unanimously adopted by wage workers of Hamilton", which called on the government to act against "pauper immigrants" and especially to "protest against the introduction of Chinese labor in any part of the Dominion and call upon the government to send back all Chinese in Canada or enforce such a poll tax as will drive them hence". Ironically, Baker also observed, "[O]ne would have supposed, from the speech of the Secretary of State (Chapleau) that he was opposing instead of proposing the measure, nine-tenths of his speech being pro-Chinese".

Although the Chinese were no threat to Ontario workers, they were taken up as easy targets in the general workers' resistance to the Macdonald — Pope policy of subsidising immigration of labourers from Europe in the 1880s. They saw this as a plot to keep wages low and create unemployment among Canadian workers. *The Globe*, and the reform Liberals, tended to support the workers' demands. On the same day that *The Globe* reported the presentation of the Royal Commission Report (25 February 1885), it also reported on a workers' meeting focused, among other things, upon the question of Chinese and factory slaves.⁴⁰ At the meeting chaired by Toronto Mayor Manning, resolutions were passed in favour of all of the following: universal manhood suffrage, giving employees first lien on proceeds in cases of insolvency, abolishing the property qualification for municipal office, legal protection for co-operative insurance schemes, and the Chinese labour question:

That the advent in Canada of Chinese under private labour contract⁴¹ and as semi-slaves is itself contrary to the spirit of freedom; that they are a menace to the morality of, and that their competition as slaves in the labour market is detrimental to

³⁹ Canada, House of Commons. 1885. *Debates*, 20, 3013 (2 July 1885).

⁴⁰ Meeting of workers — they expressed on decided views on various interesting questions — Chinese and Factory Slaves, *Toronto Globe*, p. 6 (25 February 1885).

⁴¹ Note that Andrew Onderdonk's Chinese CPR construction workers were one such private labour contract and that in the Royal Commission hearings Onderdonk spoke out strongly in favour of Chinese immigration and the positive contributions of the Chinese to Canada. Royal Commission, 148.

the welfare of working people of Canada and that their landing on Canadian soil should be totally prohibited.

On introducing the Macdonald government's response to these demands, Chapleau opined, *I am quite sure the people of British Columbia do not object to seeing the class (of Chinese) come into their country who make up the respectable merchants whom I saw in the stores of Victoria, whom I met in the drawing room at a reception held by the Lieutenant Governor of that province. To such a class I am sure nobody will object except the few to whose declamations reasonable men will not attach much importance.*

To keep the peace in British Columbia, therefore, the Act was passed as a bit of political expediency on the same day that the Macdonald government introduced a bill to refinance the CPR with government guaranteed bonds and after a spring and early summer that was dominated by the Northwest Rebellion. It was, Chapleau admitted, a violation of British constitutional principles, but he pleaded that precedents had already been set in Queensland and New South Wales, where restrictive legislation had been passed in 1881 very similar to what he was now proposing. The Act provided for a landing duty⁴² of \$50 on all Chinese (except diplomats and their servants, "merchants, tourists, men of science and students who are bearers of certificates"), a limitation on how many Chinese one ship could carry, and registration of Chinese who had been granted certificates of entry. Chinese already resident in Canada were exempt from the duty but could obtain a certificate of residence for a fee of fifty cents and then be added to the register. With the certificate, they could leave and re-enter Canada.

1893 – 1895 MACKAY'S CAMPAIGN FOR "RIGHTEOUS LAWS"

On 26 September 1893 Mackay returned a second time to Canada, along with his wife Minnie, his two daughters Mary and Bella, his son George William, and his favourite student and future husband of Bella, Koa Kau (柯玖).⁴³ It was this arrival that added a strong personal outrage to the injustice of the 1885 Law. In his diary for Tuesday, 26 September 1893, he recorded:

⁴² The term Mackay uses is "poll tax", now called "head tax". Technically, it was a "right of landing fee".

⁴³ Pseudonym name (*hao* 號) for his future son-in-law Koa Kau was Weisi (維思).

In morning at 6 a.m. hove in sight of Victoria. Passengers went ashore then at 9 a.m. set sail again. Scenery fine, Douglas Pine or Fir on both sides. At 1:30 p.m. came into Victoria Harbor [sic, it was actually Vancouver]. Brother John⁴⁴ came a board. We did not recognize him.

Vancouver, Tues 26 continued.

I went down from the shop with my family and in a few moments a Customs Officer came up and said "Come up here into the ship again". Why? I said. "Come on, I'll let you know, bring your wife and family. Your family must pay "poll tax", Why, my wife is a British subject and of course my children too. "How can you show that?" I have a paper in my box which is sealed to show it". "What box, come on now". He cut the cord and I soon showed the certificate of Registration. "It's no use sir, your wife is of Chinese extraction and you must pay up etc. Still, I'll take this paper to my superior and will soon let you know". I waited and waited but the man did not come.

A Mr. Kerr of the CPR came fortunately, and I went with him to the customs collector. There, behold was read to me the Law that my wife being a British subject had a perfect right to come ashore free. The agent was thus exposed as being wrong on the steamer impatiently and insolently. Through Mr. Brown and Mr. Kerr my student was passed and he came to the "Second" house to stay with us. One of these men advanced the \$50 poll tax as the bank was closed and only I had a Letter of Credit.⁴⁵

Four days later, on Sunday 1 October in "Dr Maxwell's church" in New Westminster, Mackay spoke on Psalm 9 and Matthew 28. Unusual for Mackay, his diary gives a detailed outline of his sermon, which ends with the following:

"III Demands:

- a. Patience on the part of the Canadian Church
- b. Another demand is that Canada should make Righteous laws and execute them righteously".⁴⁶

⁴⁴ John Mackay, who was George Leslie's oldest brother. George Leslie was the youngest of six children.

⁴⁵ MacKay Diaries, p. 951.

⁴⁶ MacKay Diaries, p. 953.

His two texts are significant. Matthew 28 recounts the resurrection of Jesus, including the command "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations", and is thus a key missionary text. The same, however, is not true of Psalm 9, which celebrates God's just rule. It reads, "*And he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to the people with uprightness. The Lord also shall be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble*".⁴⁷ One rightly takes special note of the key word "righteous", which Mackay uses repeatedly in discussing the poll tax.

From Vancouver Mackay returned home on the Canadian Pacific Railway to Oxford County, Ontario. On Sunday November 12 he spoke for two hours in his home church in Embro. Twelve hundred people were in attendance. The next day he "went with bro. John and Kau-a to London, calling on the editor of 'Advertiser', Cameron by name. He is a splendid man. Saw several noble men. All against 'Poll Tax', saw Mr. Gauld's mother, a dear old lady".⁴⁸

On 9 December 1893 *The Globe* printed a full-page report on Mackay's second return to Canada, entitled "A Noted Missionary".⁴⁹ Besides an account of Mackay's work in Taiwan, the article also gives an account of the lives of the *Zorra Pioneers*, to whom Mackay belonged. On the Poll tax, it reported:

The pleasure of his present visit to Canada was marred somewhat by the poll tax of \$50 collected upon Dr. MacKay's Chinese student by the collector of customs at Vancouver. The money has since been refunded, but not before Dr. Mackay had recorded his uncompromising opposition to all restrictive legislation against the Chinese. He holds it to be anti-progressive, and anti-commercial, and anti-Christian, His recent address upon the question in the town hall here was a remarkable, urgent and convincing effort.⁵⁰

The meeting to which the article referred was held in Woodstock Town Hall on 16 November 1893 and is described by Mackay in his diary:

At 8 p.m. met in Woodstock Town Hall. Mayor Hays in the chair. I spoke first discussing the poll tax as Anti-commercial, Anti-progress and Anti-Christian. Rev. W.A. Mackay spoke. Dr

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 953.

⁴⁸ MacKay Diaries, p. 961.

⁴⁹ *Toronto Globe*. 1893. A Noted Missionary, p. 5 (9 December 1893).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

McMullen, Rev. Wm. Hutt and McGregor, Woodstock, Sutherland, Patullo and Rev. G.S. Patterson, Embro. Resolutions were passed condemning the "Poll tax".⁵¹

On 23 January 1894 Mackay visited Detroit:⁵²

Rev. Dickie took us to the Arts Gallery, Grace Hospital, Central Prison and the Public Library. All very interesting!

Ah! American laws to debar a Chinaman from entering. How the land of Liberty is damaged by an ignorant mob out West! How thou art fallen O America.

Britannia, my fatherland I love thee for Liberty is dominant there.

Eve. meeting with about 600 here.

Mackay's love of British liberty may have reflected his hope that one day the Act could be reversed because of his campaign. Whereas his efforts did culminate in the resolution at the Presbyterian General Assembly on 19 June 1894, Mackay's campaign came to nothing once the resolution was passed.

In looking back over the approaches Mackay used to mobilise public opinion, it is clear that he drew on the repertoire of moral mobilisation instruments pioneered by the first evangelical political movement — the anti-slavery campaign of the "Clapham Sect" between 1787 and 1809. Mackay attempted to use moral suasion, religious and secular mass meetings (which produced resolutions and petitions), and lobbying visits to the government. However, Mackay was also a strong individualist, only temporarily visiting Canada (September 1893 – October 1895). As a result, he did not have the support, whether from organisations, newspapers or members of parliament, necessary to the continuation of this work. Thus, his campaign can only be remembered as an historic protest by a prophetic character. Unconventional as he was in other respects, Mackay typified the liminal role played by missionaries in Canadian history. His views were broadly admired, but, possibly owing to the great geographic distance, they could precipitate change neither in church nor in state policy. Perhaps Mackay hoped he might find in Prime Minister John Thompson what Wilberforce had in William Pitt the Younger, for both men shared "a passionate hatred of injustice and cruelty". Unfortunately, Thompson died in December 1894.

⁵¹ MacKay Diaries, p. 962.

⁵² MacKay Diaries, p. 973.

In the end, political entropy is the best explanation of why Mackay's campaign failed. He was crusading when the head tax had been collected for eight years without any obvious negative consequences, either to the country or to Chinese immigrants. It had become normalised. Indeed, as Chapleau had foreseen in 1885, Chinese immigration continued so that 39,000 Chinese immigrants (including Koa Kau) eventually paid the head tax. This policy was in force until 1923, when the Liberal government of Mackenzie King appealed to racist sentiment and barred Chinese immigration altogether — 40 years after a similar law took effect in the US. Significantly, the original \$50 head tax was raised to \$500 in 1903 (after another Royal commission) by the Laurier government, once again at the urging of British Columbia. Laurier's Liberals were no longer the reform liberals of Mackay's world.⁵³ By this time, Mackay was already buried under the waving bamboos of the land he loved, and his initiative of 1894 had been quietly dropped by the Presbyterian Church. The Mission Board moved to impose conventional Canadian missionary control over the Taiwanese Christian movement that he, his students (including his two Taiwanese sons-in-law), and his wife had built during their 30-year unconventional mission.

PERORATION

Three days after his 1893 visit to Detroit, Mackay was in Ridgetown (Kent County) for an evening meeting with 600 present. This is my maternal grandfather's home village, and today 600 people represents over one-third of the town population. It is pleasant for me to imagine that some of my grandfather's family (he being only 14 years old at the time) might have been in attendance. Indeed, the numbers that Mackay records as being present in these small towns through southern Ontario are quite remarkable. Once, he complained that only 200 were present due to bad weather, poor advertising, and "hard hearts". If today we are overjoyed to find half as many listeners in a small town church, we might also be tempted to think that times have greatly changed. Yet that is not quite accurate. For the sake of political expediency, liberal governments still look to American examples for new laws that nevertheless violate Canadian principles of justice. As Chapleau said in his 1885 speech apologising for the poll tax, "[A]re we not obliged very often to respect prejudices?" Pauper immigrants coming to

⁵³ One sign of the times was that Liberal stalwart, editor John Willison, left *The Globe* in 1901, the same year that Mackay died, to become editor of the Conservative party paper, *The Toronto News*.

Canada still encounter hard hearts and obnoxious customs officials, as shown on a print-off from the Figure 1.

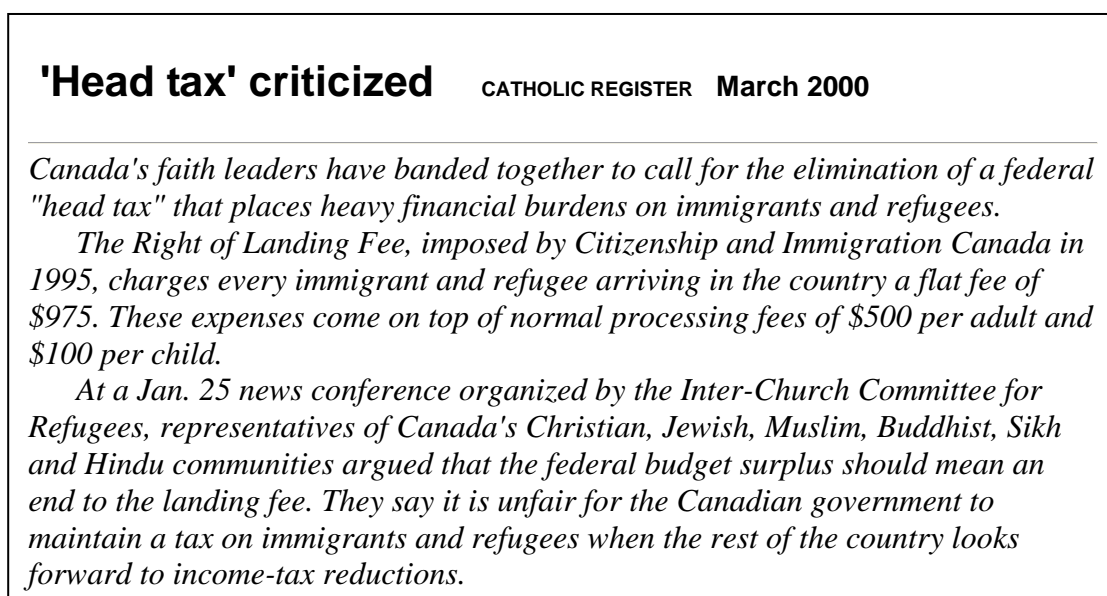


Figure 2. Catholic Register

Governments rooted in the traditions of liberal political economy do not consciously make repressive or racist laws, as from some evil master plan arising from their white patriarchal genes. Rather, these laws arise out of political responses to "assemblages of interests and discourses". Explaining Foucault's work on governmentality as a liberal art on "how to optimise the well being of the population", Tania Li⁵⁴ presents what could be a description of the 1885 Act to Regulate and Restrict Chinese Immigration: "Government entails (i) setting conditions so that people will be inclined to behave as they should, (ii) acting on actions, yet (iii) not attempting to dictate actions or coerce the population". However, as Canadian opinion became more explicitly racist, the common sense policy of "acting on actions"—i.e., expediency—led to a shameful end.

Remembering George Leslie Mackay and his prophetic opposition to racism and political expediency offers Canada a beginning for a new evaluation of the important missionary heritage in Canada's past, a history that has been erased from our collective memory. More important, it reminds us that without prophetic voices, the voices of those who, refusing to heed common sense, perversely and persistently pursue moral principles to their inconvenient conclusions, we are all "political prostitutes".

⁵⁴ Tania Li. 2005. Beyond "the State" and Failed Schemes. *American Anthropologist*, 107(3), 387.